

Planning for sport in an changing urban and sport context

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Aim

This presentation deals with the perception of sport and its role and place in urban planning in Sweden with basis in a research project carried out 2013-2015. The main research questions are:

- How do changing conditions within sport and urban planning affect the planning for sport?
- How are sport (as in organised sport) and sport issues being handled in the urban planning?
- How is sport viewed and defined in urban planning?

Background

The starting point of this project is on the one hand the changing conditions for and policies within urban planning including increased focus on densification and infill strategies as well as new solutions for integration of different functions (see for instance Boyko & Cooper, 2013). And, on the other hand it is the changing conditions for the sports movement and how sport is carried out. This includes a decreased interest in organised sport activities, increased interest in flexible, individual and self-organised activities as well as activities provided by commercial actors, the rise of 'new' activities like parkour and lifestyle sports and a growing activity segregation. A common feature of these activities is a need for other (urban) environments than traditional sport facilities. (For an international perspective on sport participation see for instance: Nicholson Hoyer & Houlihan, 2011).

Methodology

This project analyses sport in urban development and planning, using research results and examples mainly from Malmö and Stockholm. The approach is qualitative. Although planning processes and the frames for it, like legal regulations, have been studied, the most important part of the project has been about gaining a deeper understanding of meanings and perceptions regarding sport among planners and planning among sport organisations.

Several types of material and methods have been used, for instance analysis of planning and legal documents, semi structured interviews with 21 persons representing municipal planning and leisure departments, sport organisations etc, a focus group and a workshop.

The results have been presented in a report published by the Swedish Sports Confederation (Book, 2015).

Results

The main results could be summarised as follows, where each of the points will be discussed and illustrated in the oral presentation:

- Changing definition/perception of sport among planners: where the definition has become wider in order to include self-organised physical activities, which is fuelled by a critical perception of organised sport and of the municipal leisure or sport department.

- Changing focus in urban planning: mainly towards health related strategies rather than traditional sport.
- As a consequence health, recreation, physical activity, self-organised sport (and sport as part of the experience economy) are gaining support in urban planning, while more traditional sport activities and facilities are not. A common quote among planners: "Well, it is hard to find space for a football pitch".
- A growing need and demand for coordination of different types of leisure and sport activities and cooperation between different actors and sectors.
- A growing need for sport organisations/the sport movement to understand how planning works, as the level of knowledge is low and hence the opportunities to participate.
- A need for sport organisations to develop strategies for handling the criticism among planners (and others) in order to be included in the planning processes.

References

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